

City of Corunna  
Special Council Meeting  
Monday, March 12, 2001

Present: Billis, Bayless, Dumond, Hornus, Mehig, Ockerman.

Absent: Runyan (excused).

Guests: Diane & Keith Johnson; Marlene Fick; Doug Albrant; Tim Crawford, Superintendent of Public Works; Jeremy Boyd, City Treasurer; Mark Hetfield, Police Chief; Sam Burwell; Gene Sanderson; Judy Horton; Karen Hornus; Shirley & Gary Schooley; Joe Sawyer; Don Runyon; Bert Wieland; Jackie Leone, The Argus Press; Bill Constine, The Independent; and other concerned citizens.

The meeting was called to order in the City Council Chambers by Mayor Billis at 6:30 p.m.

CALL TO AUDIENCE: Karen Hornus stated she was present to address the council in regards to filling the city manager position. She further stated she did not know if council had talked with the city hall personnel to ask them if there was anyone within their rank they would like to see as the acting city manager on an interim basis or if one of them would like to be considered. The City of Corunna's future is at stake here and she believes the position should be filled in a prudent, efficient and knowledgeable manner. She also stated the city was not the first nor would it be the last to be in this position. She believes a hasty fix would be very detrimental to the city. Ms. Hornus advised from the information she has been able to gather the city could appoint someone from within the city on an interim basis or possibly a team management could be put in place. The city has professional and knowledgeable people on staff. They could meet once a day to handle any situations that might come up. She also advised council the city's charter states the city manager must authorize purchases and asked why the city clerk could not be authorized to make purchases. Ms. Hornus stated the city could also contact the Michigan Municipal League or the Mercer Group and ask them if they know of anyone who would take the position on a temporary basis. She further stated she has been advised there are retired city managers that do not want to work full-time that might be interested. She asked if anyone had asked. She also stated the Village of Williamston has bigger problems than the City of Corunna does, and they have been able to survive without a city manager for quite some time. Our city is not going to fall apart if we take the time to do a thorough hiring procedure. Ms. Hornus advised in the event that someone outside of the city is considered for the position, the city should at least do interviews for the future just like any other employer does. The person should have managerial and personnel experience. She further advised if someone was hired just because the person might be a businessman then it would be like asking any one of you to take the position. The city should be sure there is no conflict of interest with work being done for the city or with the compatibility of office statutes.

Sam Burwell, 314 W. Mack Street, applauded Ms. Hornus for what she said. He stated it would be wonderful if the city could find a retired individual who has been a city

manager of a much larger city that would like to work for our city on a part-time basis. As far as qualifications go, he did not think a businessperson would be qualified for the city manager position. He further stated he hopes the city would look for someone with minimal education experience or a degree in some type of business administration. He also stated he did not believe the city should mess with the city charter at this time and empower another office to take over as acting city manager. If someone within the city is qualified to fill the position on an interim basis then it would be fantastic if the city could come to a financial agreement with the person.

SATA – PROPERTY PURCHASES: Councilperson Ockerman stated the Shiawassee Area Transportation Agency has been growing and has many buses. There are funds available which can be used to purchase property. He further stated there are three things in the works; purchasing property from the airport, something to do with an Owosso/Caledonia Township combination deal, and purchasing the Davis Cartage property, which would affect the city's tax roll. He also stated he informed the Shiawassee Area Transportation Agency board of the lengthy process the board might have to go through just to purchase the property from Davis Cartage, but the board wants to know which direction the city wants to go. Councilperson Ockerman advised he did not want to do anything privately so that is the reason he brought the issue to the city council. He asked council to think it over and give their thoughts on the issue at the next meeting. Councilperson Dumond stated as the city council representative on the Airport Board, the board spoken with the Shiawassee Area Transportation Agency's transportation manager and the board is considering the request. Councilperson Bayless asked where the funding for the property would come from. Councilperson Ockerman advised from a separate grant that can be used for building. Councilperson Bayless asked if there any local assessment or matching funds were required. Councilperson Ockerman advised no, and if there were, he would be the first one to raise his hand in opposition. Councilperson Bayless asked if the grant would pay for the property outright without any long time debt. Councilperson Ockerman advised that was correct. Councilperson Bayless asked if the agency would be self sufficient if the government stops the funding. Councilperson Ockerman advised yes. Councilperson Bayless stated he had no objections, but he was not crazy about taking more property off of the Corunna tax roll. Councilperson Ockerman stated he was not trying to influence council one way or another. Councilperson Mehig stated he also does not want to see any more property taken off the city's tax rolls. Councilperson Ockerman advised he would go to the S.A.T.A. board and inform them the Davis Cartage property was not something the city would go along with.

CONSIDER ACTING CITY MANAGER: Dumond moved to appoint Joe Sawyer as interim city manager for 90 days. Motion died for lack of support. Councilperson Ockerman stated he had nothing against Mr. Sawyer, but he had some things of his own to present. Councilperson Ockerman further stated he would like to have discussion first if council had no objections. He also stated he was the minority on the council and has the name of someone who is interested, but he would not give the name of the person without hearing the qualifications. Councilperson Bayless stated he did not have a chance to read the information that was given to council at tonight's meeting and had no opinion on which way to go. Councilperson Bayless further stated he agreed that discussion should come

first. He also stated council should establish some perimeters of what the guidelines will be for an interim manager. He personally would like to see the council name an interim manager who is knowledgeable with the city's particulars or somebody that has vast experience in managing a city in general. Councilperson Bayless advised the interim person should be just that of interim and not somebody that is using the interim position as a stepping stone to a permanent position. Anybody who is a candidate for a permanent city manager should not be an interim. Mayor Billis stated he would like council to take the time to read the letter that council had before them. Councilperson Ockerman stated he did object because he had a list of things to present regarding criteria. He further stated he agreed with Councilperson Bayless and would rather have the interim person be just an interim and the council could take its time to look for a full-time manager. Qualifications need to be established first. Councilperson Dumond stated his motion was to appoint a person as interim only for a 90 day period. Mayor Billis stated he had the floor now and asked council if they wanted to read what was before them. He further asked if council had any other objections. Councilperson Bayless stated he objected. If he is going to read the credentials on a specific candidate, he wants to know what the city is looking for. He further stated if the city does not know what they are looking then how could council intelligently evaluate the person in those terms. He also stated there are two different documents listing the city manager's duties and responsibilities but those things only apply to a permanent manager. An interim manager would not do everything a full-time person would do. Councilperson Bayless advised council needed to identify what the key duties would be during the interim period. There are certain things that coverage is needed for and those need to be identified. He further advised any candidate the city looks at should be evaluated on the criteria established by council. Mayor Billis asked council how they wanted to proceed. Councilperson Hornus stated he would like council to work with the employees the city has on staff at the present time and immediately go out for a search through the Michigan Municipal League. He further stated the literature the city received from the Michigan Municipal League states they can speed up the process if there is a sense of urgency. He also stated education is also a big thing. Councilperson Mehig stated the city needs someone who knows what is going on to step in without needing a large learning curve. He further stated the person hired as interim should be someone local, which would give council time to review applications. Councilperson Hornus stated he would like to get someone who has the education the city desires and is knowledgeable about what is going on in the city. Councilperson Mehig asked if there were any individuals who have expressed an interest in the job. Councilperson Hornus advised he spoke with Ms. Long, and she is afraid of the job because she knows what Ms. Hitchcock went through, and she does not want to put up with that. Councilperson Mehig stated he wants to know who is available. Councilperson Hornus stated she would be the most logical, but she does want it. Ms. Long advised she does not have the time for it either. Councilperson Hornus stated the next person would be the police chief and he has no desire to take the job. The superintendent of public works and treasurer would be next but they have not been employed by the city that long. Councilperson Dumond stated in five or six weeks the city will have bulldozers and the highway department in the city, and they will try to do what they want if the city does not have someone watching them. Councilperson Hornus stated the city has a superintendent of public works. Councilperson Dumond stated he

could not handle everything. He further stated the city needs somebody in city hall who is on top of this stuff so the city will not get railroaded. He also stated his original motion was to appoint a city manager on an interim basis for 90 days. He advised Mr. Sawyer is a county commissioner, and he might choose to stay there or take off his county hat and come work for the City of Corunna. He further advised the city has to have somebody in place within the next week or two to answer questions. The construction will start whether the city is ready for it or not. Councilperson Ockerman stated he still has his list, and the basics have not been established. There is one qualified individual but there might be others. He further stated if council would agree to some fundamentals then council could take the next step. He asked if council would agree to the following guidelines for an interim manager: a degree would not necessarily be needed, experience would be ideal, a local person might be more ideal than a person who does not know the community, someone with government experience, someone who can work part-time, someone with people skills, someone who will not cost the city a fortune, someone with financial and negotiating skills, someone who would be willing to step aside after the city's search is over, someone who can handle complaints other than day to day operations, and someone who can work well with the city employees and council. Councilperson Ockerman stated Mr. Sawyer would be a candidate, but someone else has come to him and based on those guidelines the person he spoke with would be willing to step in and his name is Gary Palmer. Councilperson Ockerman stated now the city has two individuals and there might be more. Councilperson Hornus stated Mr. Palmer does have knowledge of the city. He further stated hiring someone part-time would be ideal because the city would not be locked into a big salary. Councilperson Ockerman stated Mr. Palmer would be willing to work an extra ten hours a week over and above what he is already working. He further stated the city has Nextel phones so he would be readily available and the city staff has worked with him. Councilperson Ockerman also stated Mr. Palmer would be willing to work at a flat rate of \$1,100 for those ten hours plus \$25 per hour for anything in excess, and he would be willing to step aside once the city hires a full-time manager. Mayor Billis asked if Mr. Palmer had experience in putting a budget together. Councilperson Ockerman advised he did not ask Mr. Palmer that question, but Mr. Palmer has a real edge when it comes to the streetscape project because he is very aware of what is going on. Mayor Billis stated according to the city charter, budget skills are needed. Councilperson Ockerman stated the city has an interim situation here. Councilperson Dumond stated during the interim time, the city has a budget that has to be done. Councilperson Ockerman stated the city has a treasurer. Mayor Billis stated the treasurer does not put the budget together and asked Mr. Boyd not to shake his head again. Councilperson Ockerman stated oh, that makes it so. He further stated council also puts the budget together. Mayor Billis asked council if they wanted to entertain a motion. He stated he was going to add something to the pot. The city has a streetscape project coming up and somebody has to step up and do their best to help the businesses survive through the streetscape project. He further stated it would be irresponsible to this community and to these businesses not to hire somebody. If the city is going to hire somebody, he hopes it will be somebody who has got the skill and know how to help him as a businessperson survive the storm that is just about ready to hit the community. He also stated it is going to require a lot of planning, time, and negotiating and that is the position he is taking on this situation. Mayor Billis advised there are a lot of things

facing this community that council needs to look at. The city does need someone with the qualifications to take on where the city is at currently. He further advised he believed council was in agreement about having somebody who is strongly qualified to get the city where it needs to get to today, tomorrow and in the future as far as planning. He also advised he has some strong ideas pertaining to the position. For the last several months, he has actively pursued Joe Sawyer and this has not been a secret. He has solicited all of the council members on this individual. Mayor Billis stated the reason he went to Mr. Sawyer was because he has had the opportunity to watch and get to know him as an individual. When it comes to qualifications, council can sit and establish its own qualifications as to who council thinks the right person should be. He further stated he did this over three months ago, and he was strongly swayed towards hiring Mr. Sawyer in an interim, full-time or whatever the picture might be. He has faith in this man to help him with his business downtown. Mayor Billis also stated he is also pushing his own agenda, which is to help the city grow and to increase the tax basis. After the tax base is increased through development, the water and sewer bills can be lowered for the residents in this community and that is what he looks at when he looks at Mr. Sawyer. Mayor Billis advised council can go in the direction they want to go in and told council point blank that his business survival is directly effected and that is the role he is playing as mayor and what he does with the gavel. He further advised he wants the most qualified person in the position, and he wants action and it has to happen now. Mayor Billis informed council there have been calls pertaining to the streetscape about what the contractors want to do. Capital Consultants wants this council to make decisions as far as their involvement. He further informed council there is less than six weeks and asked council if they had a plan for the city. He does not want to get the wrong person, but council has to understand that for the last three months he has not been pursuing the wrong person, and he is putting his name, reputation and business on the line because if he is wrong then he is wrong big time, but if he is right then the community will prosper from the tax base and all of the experience Mr. Sawyer can bring. Councilperson Hornus stated council was not meeting to hire a full-time city manager. Council was only appointing an acting city manager while the city searches for a city manager. He further stated he has already stated that he wants the Michigan Municipal League to do the search. Mayor Billis advised Councilperson Hornus they were not on item number three yet. Councilperson Hornus advised he knew that, but it will be coming up. Councilperson Ockerman stated he has no objections towards Mr. Sawyer, but he wanted the chance to present the other gentleman's name since the gentleman came to him. He further stated he thought it was fair to present both names to council. Mayor Billis stated there is another individual who is interested, but he did not want to mention his name since the person was not present and proceeded to pass a letter around to council. Councilperson Bayless stated when he talked about criteria, he was talking about essential job functions, which was part of the city manager's job description. He further stated he would like council to walk through the information briefly to see what the person would be doing as an interim and proceeded to review the city manager's job description. He also stated the information he just read should give council an idea on what kind of credentials the person would have to have to function properly. Councilperson Mehig stated he was very impressed with Mr. Sawyer's resume. Councilperson Dumond stated Mr. Sawyer plans to stay on as a county commissioner

until such time that he becomes a permanent city employee, which would require him to sever all ties with the county. Councilperson Ockerman stated he wants to make sure the city hires the right person, and he wants to take a little bit of time to do the selection process properly. Councilperson Dumond stated he believes it will take a full-time person to know what is happening in the city. Councilperson Ockerman asked Councilperson Dumond if he was looking for a full-time interim manager. Councilperson Dumond stated yes. Councilperson Ockerman stated he was not looking for a full-time interim manager. Councilperson Dumond stated he was talking about a full-time 90-day person. He further stated things are going to happen fast in this town and council could not go into a night meeting and find out something happened during the day. Councilperson Hornus stated he was opposed to the time frame. If the city happens to find somebody in 30 to 45 days then what will happen. Mayor Billis stated the way this government is structured it is not structured for the city council or the mayor to be outside every day. It is structured for the city manager to be the person working out in the community on a daily basis. He further stated it is the will of the public to have a full-time acting manager if there is a person who is qualified, and he does not recall the budget being set to pinch pennies while the city hires a city manager. Councilperson Dumond stated he had a figure of \$3,500 per month for three months, which would be less than what the previous manager was paid. Councilperson Bayless stated council could not appoint an interim manager for 90 days. An interim manager is appointed until the position is filled. He further stated 90 days would not be appropriate and suggested going with a month to month or week to week basis until the position is filled whether it takes 90 days or 120 days. He also stated he was only thinking about 20 hours per week and additional hours as needed depending on the circumstances. Mayor Billis stated he does not know why council wants to play a conservative game when the city has some major issues coming up. The city has a major streetscape project, a budget to prepare, all kinds of future development on the books that is being worked on. He further stated he did not understand why council wanted to play conservativeness when the city needs to get the best the city can get for the least possible amount to protect him and the people in this community. He believes the city is after the best possible scenario that the city can get for the people of this community. Councilperson Hornus stated the mayor keeps going back to the streetscape project. The city has a superintendent of public works and you are kind of humbling his position by making it sound like the city manager is going to be on the street every day. Mayor Billis pounded his gavel five times and told what council what they were going to do. Council could attack the issues but not the person who said it. He further stated he has not belittled Mr. Crawford at all. He thinks Mr. Crawford is one of the best employees the city has, but he is also not going to leave the city, streetscape, his business or anyone else's business, and the citizens in the community up to chance. He asked council to get the best person the city can get. The council has full authority and if the council feels Mr. Sawyer is not doing the job then council can get rid of him. Councilperson Mehik asked

if Mr. Palmer had submitted a resume. Councilperson Ockerman advised no. Hornus moved, Ockerman seconded to appoint Gary Palmer as the acting city manager for an additional \$1,100 per month for a minimum of ten hours per week and \$25 per hour for each hour exceeding the ten hours.

Roll call vote:

Yes: Ockerman, Hornus.

No: Bayless, Mehig, Dumond.

Motion DENIED

Councilperson Ockerman requested permission to address Mr. Sawyer so he could ask him some questions about what he thinks the job will entail regarding to hours and what his anticipated compensation would be because he did not want to make a motion that Mr. Sawyer was not acceptable. Mr. Sawyer advised that Mayor Billis has been speaking to him on and off for several months about his intentions. Mr. Sawyer further advised he was asked to submit an application in confidence. He also advised his major concern, as the Downtown Development Authority chairman and property owner, was the streetscape and the issues involving parking and traffic control. Mr. Sawyer stated he has the utmost confidence that he could handle the position especially with the staff the city has and with Mr. Crawford's ability. He further stated there is no question in his mind that the streetscape will get done, and it will be done right. He also stated he felt ten hours would not be anywhere close to what it would take to get the streetscape project done. He felt it would take at least 60 hours per week. Mr. Sawyer advised the interim position is going to be in high demand. The person not only needs to work with the businesses on the streetscape issue but oversee the city staff. He further advised the budget needs to be put together as stated in the city charter. He also advised he has read the city charter and has worked on the county budget and believes he can perform these duties. The city manager's job is a full-time job in itself; otherwise, the city would not have one. Mr. Sawyer stated the city also has contract negotiations coming up. He further stated if the city does not have a city manager or acting city manager for three months or longer then he could not perform his duties as the chairman of the Downtown Development Authority. He also stated when he read the city charter it indicated to him that the 90 day clock is very important because there is a deadline in the charter that stated the city has to have a city manager or acting city manager in place within 90 days. The charter states the city cannot go beyond 90 days without anybody. Mr. Sawyer advised there is an acting city manager in place so the council has fulfilled the charter's requirement. Councilperson Ockerman stated he personally disagreed with what Mr. Sawyer said but told him to continue. Mr. Sawyer stated he has positioned himself where he could start tomorrow as full-time and was willing to work 40, 50 or 60 hours per week. Councilperson Ockerman asked Mr. Sawyer if he could work 40 hours per week. Mr. Sawyer advised yes. Councilperson Ockerman asked Mr. Sawyer if he had to immediately resign from the county commission if he takes the city manager position. Mr. Sawyer advised no. Councilperson Ockerman asked Mr. Sawyer if he was still okay if the position was on an interim basis. Mr. Sawyer advised he would be okay, but he needs to be able to make a commitment himself for approximately a three-month period. Councilperson Ockerman stated he understood that and asked if he would be jeopardizing his county commission seat. Mr. Sawyer advised no, but at this stage of the game, he would have a hard time winning re-election because he was definitely demonstrating his allegiance to Corunna. Councilperson Ockerman asked Mr. Sawyer if he could give him a figure that would be acceptable for working 40 hours per week. Mr. Sawyer advised \$3,500 per month, and he would keep track of his hours. Councilperson Ockerman stated

he was impressed with Mr. Sawyer and nothing he said was detrimental to Mr. Sawyer in any fashion. Ockerman moved, Dumond seconded to hire Joe Sawyer on a permanent part-time basis until the city can get a full-time manager for a 40-hour base salary in the amount of \$3,500 per month effective March 13, 2001.

Roll call vote:

Yes: Ockerman, Bayless, Hornus, Mehig, Dumond.

No: None.

Motion CARRIED

CONSIDER PROCEDURES TO HIRE CITY MANAGER: Councilperson Dumond stated the Mercer Group has put in a bid in the amount of \$18,500 to find the city a good city manager. He further stated the Michigan Municipal League's bid is closer to the city's ballpark and suggested placing an advertisement in the Michigan Municipal League's magazine. He also stated the Michigan Municipal League would charge the city ten-percent of the starting salary with actual expenses not to exceed \$500. Councilperson Dumond advised the city should start advertising immediately. Councilperson Hornus stated the Michigan Municipal League would do all of the work for the city. Councilperson Ockerman stated the Michigan Municipal League is different than what search agencies use to be. In the past, a fee would not be paid unless a person is hired and it appears to him that is not the way it longer works. He further stated ten percent of the base salary would cost the city \$5,500. Councilperson Dumond stated if the city does not select one of their candidates then it would only cost the city actual expenses. Councilperson Ockerman stated he wanted that checked out because that is not the way he read it. He further stated it would cost the city \$14,500 if the Mercer Group was selected. Councilperson Ockerman stated the Mercer Group was too high tech for the city. He further stated he would like to find out if the city would have to pay the Michigan Municipal League \$5,500 if the city hires someone other than their candidate. He asked if the city was going to require a bachelor's degree in public administration as printed on page two in the Michigan Municipal League's information. Councilperson Dumond stated if someone has a degree or 20 years of experience, he would look at the person who has 20 years of experience. Councilperson Bayless suggested changing the word "required" to "preferred" because the city might get more candidates to apply for the position. Councilperson Ockerman stated the item was not budgeted because the city did not anticipate that this would happen. Councilperson Dumond stated it appeared the fee would hit in the next year's budget. He further stated the chances of hiring somebody within the next 30 or 60 days was not probable. Councilperson Bayless stated if the city has local people applying for the position and they end up in the final pool then the city should not have to pay the full fee because the Michigan Municipal League did not go and find the person. Councilperson Dumond stated the Michigan Municipal League needs to understand that. Councilperson Bayless stated the city should give the Michigan Municipal League the short list of names of possible candidates that should not count towards the full fee because they did not have to go out and find those people. Councilperson Ockerman asked if the council wanted to limit themselves to who the Michigan Municipal League comes up with or to seek other avenues. Councilperson Ockerman suggested using the original city manager summary instead of the Michigan Municipal League's description as a guideline. Councilperson Bayless stated the



summary does not mention any education at all. Councilperson Ockerman stated there was no need to put a lot of weight on education. Councilperson Bayless stated education should not be excluded entirely. Ockerman moved, Hornus seconded to use the original city manager summary as a guideline.

Roll call vote:

Yes: Hornus, Mehig, Dumond, Bayless, Ockerman.

No: None.

Motion CARRIED

Ockerman moved, Hornus seconded to seek the Michigan Municipal League's help in pursuing a city manager and to have someone from the Michigan Municipal League present at the next meeting.

Roll call vote:

Yes: Mehig, Bayless, Dumond, Hornus, Ockerman.

No: None.

Motion CARRIED

CALL TO AUDIENCE: Don Runyon, 563 Cary Street, stated years ago the state use to have a Michigan Employment Security Commission or Job Central and asked if they had a place for professionals. Mayor Billis advised yes they do. Mr. Runyon stated the Wall Street Journal has a paper for professionals who are looking for work. It would cost the city 55 cents for a paper. Mayor Billis stated most professionals know to go through the Michigan Municipal League.

Gary Schooley, 301 Ferry Street, stated he was a bit confused and asked council to help straighten him out. He further stated when the meeting began, council stated they were looking for an interim city manager who would be willing to step aside, but the motion stated that Mr. Sawyer would be appointed as permanent part-time until someone was appointed full-time. Now, it sounds like Mr. Sawyer could be considered for the full-time job. Councilperson Dumond stated that was right. Mr. Schooley stated he thought council stated that the interim person would be willing to step aside, which would in effect take Mr. Sawyer out of the running for the position. Councilperson Bayless advised he stated that was something he would like to see, but the city could not exclude anybody. He further advised he would like to see somebody, who has no desire to take the job full-time, step in and be an interim, but he could not exclude anybody from being an interim because the person has the desire to be hired permanently.

Keith Johnson, 211 Hastings Street, stated whoever did their homework on both candidates did a fine job. There are a lot of qualified people in the community and either one of them would do a fine job. He further stated he was pretty impressed on what happened at the meeting and that is what he likes to see. There were several valid questions raised tonight.

Sam Burwell, 314 W. Mack Street, commended the city council for what happened at the meeting. He thought the council would leave the meeting without appointing an acting

city manager. He further stated he was very pleased to see the city council hire someone on a full-time basis, and it would have been a mistake to hire someone as part-time. He also stated he would support the city manager, and as Mr. Sawyer stated earlier, the 90 day clock stopped when council made the motion to hire an interim city manager. Mr. Burwell advised the city has as much time as it needs to do a thorough and professional search. He further advised he knew a little about head hunting and spending \$5,000 was a very fair price.

ADJOURN: Dumond moved to adjourn.

Roll call vote:

Yes: Dumond, Hornus, Ockerman, Mehig, Bayless.

No: None.

Motion CARRIED Time was 7:58 p.m.

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DR. JAMES BILLIS, MAYOR

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YVONNE F. LONG, CITY CLERK